

Parable of the Strong Man

Matthew 12:22-32 (Mark 3:22-30)

²² Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. ²³ And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David? ²⁴ But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.

Jesus performs a miracle and delivers a man from a devil, opened his eyes, and opened his mouth so that they can function again. The people are amazed at what they witnessed in the physical manifestation.

As a result of Jesus' ministry to this man, "all" the people start to believe as referenced in the question in the form of a statement that Jesus must be the Messiah.

It wasn't the miracles that set off the Pharisees, it was the comment/question referring Jesus as the Messiah that set them off. So rather than celebrating Christ as the Messiah, they instead try to discredit him. Notice they do not attack the obvious parts of the miracles...sight and speech. Instead, it is the less obvious spiritual matter of casting out devils. Their counter argument is that Jesus can only cast out the devils through the power of Beelzebub (another name for satan) the leader of devils.

²⁵ And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: ²⁶ And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? ²⁷ And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges.

Jesus' response to their accusations is a comparison and questions. Addressing in the natural through the parable.

Important Note: Jesus doesn't defend himself, instead he focuses on the greater matter of them denying the power of the Holy Spirit. There is important application here. Often we will first defend ourselves and our name/position while this can be a distraction to focusing on the greater more important issue. God is our defense so don't be distracted.

It is a principle that any kingdom that is divided or fights against itself will fail. We clearly see that in the natural. Jesus then takes this known natural truth and makes a spiritual connection by stating the same natural principle applies. Satan's kingdom will likewise fail if he fights against himself. Jesus then asks that question for the hearers to consider and answer...if satan is divided, how can his kingdom survive. The answer is it can't. Logically, their argument doesn't make any sense. But **their jealousy and pride prompt this illogical response or today what we would call misinformation.** We see misinformation and conspiracy theories today. It is easy to see that such misinformation is fueled by fear of losing power,

position, etc. Such misinformation can distract and keep you from the truth of God and miss the Kingdom.

Next response is the question, if it is true that I (Jesus) cast out devils through the power of Beelzebub, then by what power do their children cast them out? The answer must show that Jesus can't cast them out by the power of satan and neither can their children or disciples; so, they will be judged for their false accusations.

²⁸ But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. ²⁹ Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house.

Jesus now **counters the misinformation of the Pharisees with the truth**. If it doesn't make sense that he would cast out devils through the power of satan, then he must cast them out using the power of the Holy Spirit. Now, if it is through the power of the Holy Ghost, then the Kingdom of God has arrived. That means our deliverance has arrived through Christ.

He adds a parable for further emphasis and understanding. You can't enter into a strong person's house and destroy or bring down that house, unless you first take out and eliminate the threat of the strong man. Only then will you be successful. In other words, **if you are trying to bring down the devil's house, you have to bind him first....Jesus is showing he has that authority over the strong man** (satan).

³⁰ He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.

³¹ Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. ³² And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.

Jesus now explains the danger in this kind of illogical argument and position the Pharisees have taken. If you are not with Jesus and not gathering souls with him, then you are working against him and scattering the sheep. If you are not working with Jesus for the Kingdom, you are working against the Kingdom and the will of God. That is not a good thing. **Their pride and desire to remain in power has them actively working against the kingdom of God** and places them in severe judgement.

The unpardonable sin – there is a sin that Jesus here describes that will not be forgiven. Even speaking against Jesus himself can be forgiven but speaking against the Holy Ghost is not forgivable. Let's examine this closer. **See also Mark 3:28-30**, which outlines the severe penalty for saying Jesus worked miracles through an unclean spirit.

Blasphemy = slander, evil speaking, railing.

Why mention this now? It must be because the religious leaders were actually committing (or on the verge of) this very sin against the Holy Ghost. What were they doing? They were not just speaking against Jesus but **slandering the Holy Ghost by attributing the power of Jesus to satan rather than giving**

proper credit to the Holy Spirit. What they were doing was in fact speaking against the Holy Ghost because they were speaking against the work of the Holy Ghost through Jesus. This according to Jesus is unforgivable.

- Note, the power of the Holy Spirit working through Jesus delivered a man and served as a witness of Jesus and caused the people to refer and start to believe in him as the Messiah.
- The Pharisees not only reject Jesus, but they are rejecting the work and the testimony of Jesus as Messiah.

My Favorite Commentary Notes:

David Guzik – Their rejection of Jesus showed that they were completely rejecting the ministry of the Holy Spirit’s ministry. That ministry is to testify of Jesus (John 15:26). One has truly blasphemed the Holy Spirit and essentially called Him a liar in respect to His testimony about Jesus.

- Many sincere people have been troubled about whether they have committed this sin. I certainly at one time had these thoughts and fears. “...but let it be observed that no man who believes the divine mission of Jesus Christ, ever can commit this sin: therefore, let no man’s heart fail because of it,” (Clarke).

Matthew Henry – there is no cure for a sin so directly against the remedy.

Jamieson, Fausset & Brown (JFB) has a very interesting perspective. They state that the unpardonable sin is not a result of “any greater sanctity” of the Holy Ghost over Jesus Christ. Instead, the opinion is there is a difference between slandering Jesus in his “veiled condition and unfinished work” out of ignorance and/or unbelief, “and slandering the same blessed Person after the blaze of glory which the Holy Ghost was soon to throw around His claims, and in the full knowledge of all that. The Pharisees had not as yet done this; but in charging Jesus with being in league with hell they were displaying beforehand a malignant determination to shut their eyes to all evidence, and so, bordering upon, and in spirit committing, the unpardonable sin.”

I also like the JFB perspective for it seems to fit nicely with the Bible. It is one thing to speak against Christ in the early stages of going through the first several steps; it is another thing to speak against Him after a level 4 revelation. Reference the Children of Israel in the wilderness after crossing the Red Sea and experiencing “Pentecost” at Mount Sinai, yet their failure after all of this evidence is seen when they create idols and give them credit over their deliverance from Egypt rather than God (Exodus 32:4).

Application for today – why should we care and how can we use this?

- ❖ The working of the miracles Jesus performed was through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- ❖ The people started to believe in Christ as a result of the manifestation of the work of the Spirit.
- ❖ Out of fear, pride and jealousy, the Pharisees accuse Jesus of being successful through the power of the devil rather than the Holy Spirit.

- ❖ What phase of the seven steps maturity model do you think the Pharisees are at? They certainly are not at Level 1 where humility and recognizing the need for God starts. We know from these levels that one cannot be saved and repent unless they are first humble.
- ❖ **Don't be discouraged**, there will be haters who may not accept what God is doing in your life or celebrate you.
- ❖ Address them in the form of a question so they focus on the facts of the matter rather than defending yourself.
- ❖ **Don't fall for misinformation**; test the source using the steps to see if the information brings God glory.
- ❖ Mark 3:29-30 shows Jesus states these Pharisees are in danger of damnation because they are lying on the Holy Spirit by saying the work being done is through the power of an unclean spirit. We should be careful not to make the same mistake. Is it possible to attribute the working of the Spirit through others to an unclean spirit? Is the sin only in reference to the works of Jesus or can it also apply to his disciples since Christ lives in them? I believe the answer is it can also happen to us....we should be careful not to make the mistake of the Pharisees.
- ❖ We may be particularly at risk if we go beyond criticizing people and denying the power of the Holy Spirit working in their life.

Look at the parable.

- ❖ If we fight against ourselves, we cannot stand. This applies to us as individuals, families, churches, as a nation. We may need to stop fighting against each other.
- ❖ If we are to defeat the enemy working in our life, we have to first bind the strong man. That means we have to bring under control the power of the enemy before we can cast out the unclean things in us. The parable shows we cannot do this in our own strength.
- ❖ Jesus is the one who can bind the strong man and deliver us.

What do the features of the parable represent:

- Strong man – satan
- The one who can bind him – Jesus
- The house – represents us, our temple/body
- The goods – what the devil has control over and has taken from us

How can we have Jesus bind satan for us? Follow the first four steps/levels is the key:

- Humbly submit to God and recognize the need for help,
- Repent and change your mind about trying to work things out in your own strength,
- Place your hope in Jesus, accept His life and let Him live in you,
- Be led by the Holy Spirit and through His power, bring glory to God and minister to others.

Observation:

- When I was lost, satan controlled my house.



- If I want my stuff back and how can I get Jesus to bind the strong man today? The answer is to simply follow the four steps above.

Make sure you apply God's perspective to your situation rather than the world's perspective.

- ❖ People – see a miracle, see Jesus as Christ, experience God and the truth.
- ❖ Pharisees - see a miracle, see a fellow rather than the Christ, see the devil and a lie.

The miracle reveals two perspectives, those who see the Kingdom and welcome it; those who don't see it and deny the truth. Believers versus haters.

Bonus Scriptures: See Luke Chapter 11:14-28

- ❖ A life that only goes to step 1-3 where the devil is removed, is not sufficient. The demon can easily return with unclean friends. Therefore, a life not filled with the Holy Spirit (step 4) leaves room for the devil to return.

Summary:

The Spirit of God is the truth, do not deny the truth through stubborn pride. This places us on dangerous ground.....the same ground and position that these Pharisees are on. Remember, they worshipped and were often in the temple serving God. You can be religious and still miss the Spirit of God. Follow the steps!